9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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in the combined pastimes of feasting and foretelling the future, 796
and cabbages figure in many an old game, for they are of 221
ancient lineage: the potato, barely three centuries introduced, has not displaced them in traditional ceremony. It is the young folks' day. Many of the games played turn upon the theme of identifying the future husband, and we shall see in the following chapters that match-making and marriage were among the functions of the great festivals, closely linked up with the magic of the earth's increase and the prosperity of crops and animals.

In parts of Ireland curious traditions attach to St. Martin's Eve (November 10th) and the feast on the following day. A sheep or a fowl is ceremonially killed and its blood [782] ●
sprinkled in the corners of the house. No wheel must turn on the day of the festival. Finally there are the mid-winter celebrations, now marked by Christmas and New Year, which carry the year round towards St. Bridget's Eve. On St. Stephen's Day (December 26th) the hunting of the wren was formerly an occasion for general revel: it is now little more than a children's game.

We must conclude this chapter with some suggestions, 443
necessarily brief and tentative, as to the importance of these 527
seasonal gatherings in the social and commercial life of peasant Ireland. From very early times the major ritual assemblies of the year provided opportunity for exchange of goods, of livestock and of news, and for the maintenance of folk tradition and bardic skill. In ancient Ireland it is recorded that there were two kinds of assemblies, the "aonach" for pleasure and the "aireacht" for business, but it seems probable that, like the great fairs of recent times, they served both purposes. It is suggestive of the ritual and religious element in the old assemblies that they generally met upon hill-tops—often the sites of prehistoric burials—and that they took place at the fixed times marking the beginning of the Celtic seasons. May and November remain the favourite periods for country fairs, and the hiring fairs were always held at these times. A century ago the February and August fairs were also of considerable importance. The Old Lammas Fair

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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764 people are at it, too, walking along behind." In the Aran Islands, as we saw in Chapter 7, the corpse was carried out through the back door, and the front doors of all houses were closed as the funeral passed by. In Co. Mayo the coffin was carried three times round the church, sunwise, and pipes [982] filled with tobacco were left, presumably as offerings, on the grave. To prevent the spirit returning to the house of the living, it used to be thought necessary to apply a " lick " of whitewash around the door and window openings. The association of white stones and white shells with graves is [822] probably another prehistoric survival. Many of the megalithic cairns were covered with white quartz stones. It often happens that old superstitions and customs survive under the guise of children's games, and we shall have something to say about toys and games in the following chapter.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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after this date, for the *púca*, a supernatural being, is busy befouling unpicked fruit at Hallowe'en. Here again we notice superstition acting as a stimulus towards the completion of routine tasks. The return of the livestock from their summer grazings, once accompanied by their herders, made the occasion one of family reunion, and this is a strong element in the present festival. But it was also a reunion with the ancestral spirits of the family: for Hallowe'en was preeminently a commemoration of the dead, a time when ghosts and fairies were unusually active, the whole of the world of the supernatural astir and the dead returned to their earthly homes. On that night the grass-grown homesteads—the fairy raths—were wide open and the fairies were on the move to winter quarters, surely a folk memory of a former transhumance. It used to be thought unlucky not to make preparations for the return of the dead by leaving the door of the house open, putting out tobacco and traditional dishes such as sowans—a kind of porridge—and setting seats around the fire. The games and amusements which alone survive have commonly degenerated into pranks and horseplay, but one can detect in them echoes of magical observances. The many divination customs may well have begun as rites to avert evil or to secure the benefits which they now pretend to forecast. Among the things involved in these games and divinations are apples, nuts, oatcakes, cabbages, a ball of yarn, articles made of straw and rushes (Fig. 86), and herbs such as yarrow. The wearing of straw dresses and the breaking of pots are certainly archaic elements. In Co. Cork there survived well into last century a Hallowe'en ceremony similar to the well-known Mari Lwyd of South Wales: a procession was led by a figure clad in a white shirt and carrying a horse's head. This 'white mare' was followed by youths blowing cow-horns, and as they stopped to levy toll from farmhouses they recited a long string of verses 'savouring strongly of paganism'.[1] Hallowe'en bonfires and noisy demonstrations remind us that these features of Guy Fawkes' Day have, in England, been stolen from the older festival.

In certain districts, especially in Connacht, north Munster and south Leinster, strange customs have been associated with

[1] *J.R.S.A.I.* (1853), 303—19.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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527 782 the Feast of St. Martin on 11th November. On St. Martin's Eve the blood of a farm animal or fowl was spilled and sprinkled in the corners of the house, on the door-posts and windows, and in the byre and stable. In some areas the blood was also used to make the mark of a cross on the forehead of each member of the household. The flesh was eaten on St. Martin's Day, which is by tradition one of the feast days on which flesh meat is taken.

[292] [285] [769]

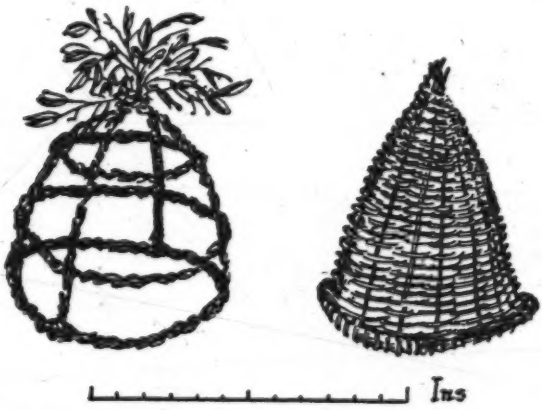

FIG. 86. Hallowe'en caps. *Left:* of plaited straw, Co. Down. *Right:* of woven rushes, Co. Kerry.

We recall that in Scotland a mart was an animal killed at Martinmas to be salted down as winter food, and it may well be that this very practical custom grew out of the cult, which was intended 'to exclude evil spirits for the year'.[1] It seems that seabirds were sometimes killed for the occasion, and there are many superstitions relating to the ill luck which attended anyone who went fishing at Martinmas. Wheel-turning of any kind, whether on cart, mill or spinning wheel, was prohibited. These sacrificial offerings and tabus must be of great antiquity and relate to the preparations for winter. St. Martin's Summer was regarded as the last spell of fine weather before the gales began in earnest. There are hints in folklore that ailing children were

[1] I. Weld, *Roscommon*, 553.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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sometimes killed at this time, so that the animal slaughter may be a sacrificial substitute. 527 [782]

Although Christmas is the outstanding Christian festival of the year its traditional 'Twelve Days' of holiday are steeped in pagan lore and in folk practices relating to the winter solstice and the new year. In Co. Cavan I came across a custom known as 'blowing the Christmas horns' by which youths heralded the festival by blowing horns from hilltops. The burning of candles on Christmas Eve is a ceremony which involved divination as well as devotion. 'Each district seems to have its taste in colour. For example, in Limerick and Clare white candles are mainly used, while red and green are popular everywhere. In the Midland areas pink candles are sought, and in some parts of Dublin only blue candles will be taken. In Killarney nothing less than a 6-lb. candle will suffice for the occasion'.[1] On Christmas Day traditional ball-games were played, often between parishes, and near the coasts these meetings took place on the strands. [526]

St. Stephen's Day is in many parts of the country associated with the hunting of the wren, and the sport is not entirely extinct. It seems that some details of the ceremony, such as the rhymes which are sung, are of English origin, but the wrenboys often wore straw masks in the native tradition, and occasionally animal skins or horns. The wrens were killed beforehand by noisy and excited bands of youths, and carried on a holly bush or a decorated wooden tray on St. Stephen's Day (Fig. 87). The procession, shouting and singing the prescribed songs to the accompaniment of home-made skin tambourines, made its way from house to house demanding money or drinks. The wrenboy processions, despite their English rhymes, appear to be a degeneration of more elaborate performances of native origin which had affinities with the mummers' plays and which like them may have been attracted by the powerful prestige of the Christmas festival from their proper season of spring. At one time the wrenboy ceremonies involved much fertility symbolism and were attended by men disguised as women.[2] The robin, linked with the wren in superstition, was also the object of persecution in south-western Ireland, but in this case the tail 527 825

[1] *Ireland* (Bulletin of the Department of External Affairs) No. 303 (1955), 10.
[2] E. R. R. Green, *U.J.A.*, 9 (1946), 3–21.

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776 823 [789] of the cross over it, said the Lord's Prayer, dug a hole in the mud at the well with her left heel, and went away without looking back. As might have been expected, the butter had "come" by the time she had got home again, and she used to quote the case as "proof positive." Besides the forts and wells, the dolmens are believed to have been fairy homes, but in my enquiries since 776 1892 I have never been able to authenticate a case of offerings ● 782 at them of milk and butter, although small basins like the Swedish "elf mills" are found in the covers of more than one of these 823 structures, and large *bullauns* or basins at others, such as Ballyganner Hill near Noughaval, Cappaghkennedy on the hills above Corofin, and Newgrove and Kiltanon near Tulla in eastern Clare. Food and drink, however, have been, until at least the present century, set out in plates and cups in Inchiquin and Moyarta Baronies, and in the latter, on the Shannon bank, the slops were thrown out and clean plates, water, chairs, and a well-swept hearth left by a punctilious servant for fairy guests in 1888 or 1889.

776 823 The greatest fairy monarch in Clare was "Donn of the Sandhills" (now the golf links), near the old castle of Doogh, (*i.e.* Dumhach or Sand Dune), near Lehinch. He, or one of the other fairy princes named Donn, appears in a list of the divine race of the Tuatha Dé Danann,[41] and is therefore of the family of the Dagda, and, it may be presumed, a lineal descendant of the ancient Ana, Mother of the Gods. A well-known Irish scholar and antiquary, Andrew MacCurtin, before 1730 addressed a political petition to Donn of Dumhach complaining, like most Irish antiquaries, of the neglect of the gentry, and praying for any menial post at his Court.[42] As there was none that answered, the petitioner had to rest content with the hospitality of the MacDonnells of Kilkee and the O'Briens of Ennistymon. Donn's heartless conduct met poetic justice, for he has ever since "lacked a sacred bard," and, save for a slight uneasiness in a few poor old people passing across the sandhills after the golfers have left and the sun has set, he is now all but forgotten. In another poem of MacCurtin's, on a monk's horse "overlooked" and killed by the evil eye, or by the look of a red-haired woman, or

[41] *Cath Finntraga* (ed. Kuno Meyer), p. 15.

[42] Mss. Royal Irish Academy, 23. M. 47.

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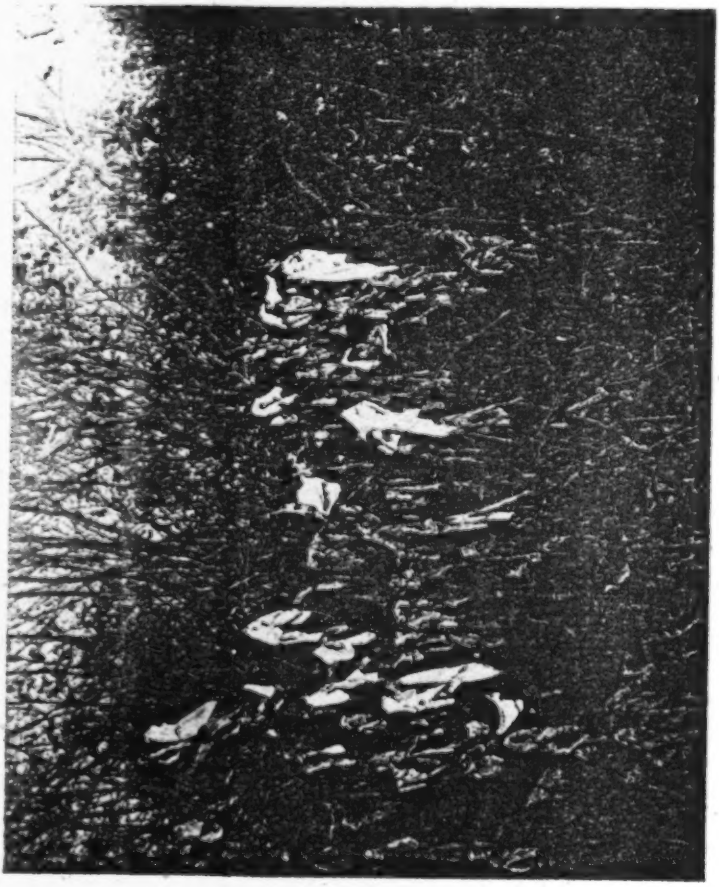
Plate X.



ST. SENAN'S TREE WITH RAG OFFERINGS, KILTINANLEA.

To face p. 210. [p. 231]

[Facing p. 231]

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his son and daughter imbecile. The son survived till 1853, and no other members of the family were affected after the well was restored.[14] The Newmarket well indignantly removed itself to its present site when "a dirty woman washed her feet in it," and it also gave her the complaint it usually cured. So, also, when the holy well above Oughtmāma[15] was offended, it closed, and broke out lower down the hillside, as the Sruhaunanaeve or "saints' stream," and the water of Killone well refused to boil. The Cunninghams, living near it, spoilt their cooking by using its water, though "they knew it would not boil." John Windele tells of other resentful wells in Cork and Kerry; for example, the well at Labba Molagga (Cork) ran dry when a woman washed her clothes in it, and at Maunaholtora the well near a dolmen ran dry, and its water refused to boil.[16] The Irish "Nennius" tells a story of ducks that could not be boiled because the water would not get hot while they were in it. In the last century a woman who drew water from a well and saw it did not boil found a fish in it. She took the fish back to the well, and the water then boiled without any difficulty. The mud of the dolmen or "well" of Tobergrania at Ballycroum cured sore or short-sighted eyes, and that of the bullaun or basin at Kiltinanlea church near Clonlara did the same. The well of St. Michael at Kilmihil was once powerful. Father Anthony Bruodin, a Franciscan and author of a history of his order[17] full of curious particulars about Clare before 1640, tells how "Lady" Mariana, wife of Thomas MacGorman, of the author's kinsfolk, had in 1632 long suffered from gout. The Archangel appeared to her in a dream, and bade her go to his church and dig where she should see rushes growing near it. Aided by her son and Dermot O'Quaely, the parish priest of Kilmihil, she found the well and was cured. Many other persons got similar relief, but there seems no tradition of any cures by it preserved among the people of Kilmihil.

Offerings.—It is right, on visiting a well, to make offerings of

[14] So Mrs. Connors at Fortanne.

[15] Pronounced Ooght-máw-mā. It is a weird spot with three ancient churches in a grassy basin on the flank of a terraced hill of bare grey limestone.

[16] Windele, Mss. Royal Irish Academy; Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, vol. iii., pp. 765-9.

[17] *Propugnaculum Catholicæ Fidei*, 1665.

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small objects, only of value as homage. Rag offerings are naturally most frequent where there is a "blessed bush" at the well, but they are frequently hung on a bramble, or even, on the Atlantic coast, kept in place by stones. Rags abounded, with other offerings, at Gleninagh, at least till 1899, being tied to the twigs of an old elder bush. They were hung in quantities on the stunted old hawthorn at Oughtmāma well, and were found at Tobersraheen, at Aglish graveyard in Ogonello, and on the large fallen hawthorn near the basin at Kiltinanlea. They are often accompanied by rosaries, religious medals, necklaces and ribbons, broken or whole plaster and china figures and vessels, and glass, buttons, pins, and nails. Such objects are abundant at many wells, such as the little rock well in Glensleade between the largest Berneens dolmen and the road, Killone altar, St. Senan's well near Kiltinanlea (Plate XI.), Fortanne, Kilseily, St. Lachtin's well near Miltown Malbay, Kilcredaun, and a well of St. Inghean Baoith (stopped by a too zealous Protestant, but recently reopened and dedicated to St. Joseph) near Inchiquin lake. The almost disused dolmen-well of Tobergrania had in 1893 two rude crosses of laths tied together, buttons, bottles, glass, crockery, and a coin.[18] In 1889 Kilfarboy well near Milltown was frequented on Sundays and Thursdays by sick persons, and abounded in such offerings as bits of leather, crockery, and blacking pots. (I am not certain whether this note refers to St. Lachtin's well or to one near Kilfarboy church.) China and pebbles have been offered at Kilcredaun in a cleft beside the Shannon estuary, and pebbles placed in the "Font" of Doughnambraher in central Clare.[19]

THOS. J. WESTROPP.

(*To be continued.*)

[P 234]

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green sweaters, men shamrocks in their buttonholes, and girls green hair ribbons, and there is much visiting in the afternoon following a special meal. Women spend the last weeks of Lent preparing new clothes for their spouses, their children, and themselves, which first are worn to mass on Easter. Eggs are accumulated before the feast day so that each member of the family will have several to eat at breakfast before mass, and in some homes the children gather and hide eggs the week before Easter to see who can collect the most by Sunday morning.

June 14th in Inis Beag is "pattern day," derived from the word patron, which honors the patron saint. Until the 1920s, when suppressed by the clergy, this day and the two days following it rivaled the 12 days of Christmas in festivity. Then it was customary for people from nearby islands and the mainland to visit Inis Beag, and the local folk in turn to attend pattern days in islands and communities in their vicinity. The celebration commenced with the digging out of sand from the church of the patron saint and from his tomb, or "bed," so that during the night of vigil islanders and visitors could pray while walking around the grave and rest in the church to gain special favor from the saint and from God. The day itself saw masses celebrated in the chapel, and athletic, dancing, and other competitions staged on the strand and contiguous common land. Tents were erected to accommodate vendors of food and drink, as well as solo and figure dancers who performed to the tunes played by visiting musicians of note. Most visitors departed at the end of the day, but those who remained were invited to take part in two more days of revelry in certain island homes, where dancing, singing, and drinking prevailed day and night. It was the prevalence of factional fighting and promiscuous behavior engendered by drunkenness which prompted the church to restrict the traditional practices of pattern day.

In the 1930s, the priest inaugurated a custom of celebrating mass on pattern day in the church of the patron saint; but it persisted for only two decades, and today the bed is cleared of sand but the church is not. My wife and I observed only 11 persons praying and resting during the night of vigil in 1960. Miraculous cures, appropriately embodied in legends and anecdotes, are claimed for persons who have propitiated the patron saint in this manner in the past, and most of those who still observe the vigil are seeking relief for physical ills. The most recent cures reported are for spinal meningitis, rheumatism, a deformed knee, and an eyeball pierced with a thorn. No work is done on pattern day now, and a dance in the evening, seldom attended by visitors other than tourists, is the only vestige of the gayety which once marked the day. This dance, just as the St. Patrick's Day dance, did not take place in 1960, even though an accordionist and two other mainlanders came out by *curach* to attend it; the shyness of local girls rather than the tide was the disruptive factor on this occasion.

All Saints is a holyday of obligation November 1st, and is followed next day by another feast—All Souls. One of the most popular of humorous anecdotes deals with All Saints' Day in a neighboring island, where once long ago the Church of Ireland pastor gave the day off to men working for him; when ten days later they asked to be off once again for St. Martin's Day, he inquired with seeming pique, "And where was Martin on All Saints' Day?" The feast of All Souls is also a workless day in Inis Beag, although the cemetery is given its one cleaning of the

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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• 782 year during the early morning. The folk visit the church and graveyard throughout the day and are awarded indulgences for their prayers in behalf of souls of the dead residing in Purgatory. In the cemetery, prayers are offered for relatives, one at a time, and then for everyone buried there, those lost at sea, and those who have no one to pray for them. An islander going to the chapel makes a succession of visits inside to pray, retiring to the churchyard after each prayer; an indulgence is granted for every visit, and some children carry small stones and pile them outside of the chapel to keep count of the indulgences thus acquired. It is said of those who remain longest in the cemetery and make the most number of visits to the chapel that they are attempting to mollify the ghosts of relatives whom they treated badly when alive.

796 The 12 days of Christmas commence with the feast of the Nativity on December 25th and end with the feast of the Epiphany on January 6th, and include the feasts of St. Stephen on December 26th, Holy Innocents on December 28th, and Circumcision on January 1st. This is the high point of the year for the folk, even though it is a much quieter period today than it was half a century ago, when social concerns outweighed religious ones. Work is suspended altogether on Christmas and the three days following it and on January 1st and 6th, and during
[167] the rest of the period only "light chores" are done. Importance is attached to the
582 12 days over and above their religious significance and the fact that little work is
[574] done; for at this time emigrants return to Inis Beag on holiday; if a marriage is to occur during the year it is likely to be arranged then; at least one party usually is given which attracts most of the adults; and the men gather in the pubs on
[521] several nights to sing, dance, and tell stories. For weeks before Christmas, rumors abound as to which relatives will visit the island, who will marry whom, and where the party will take place; these serve to sharpen the anticipation of the islanders and to make them less mindful of the worsening of the weather.

[292] In preparation for the Christmas season, new clothes are fashioned—as at Easter—to be worn initially on the five feast days, and it is usual for a man needing
[351] a new *crios* to have it woven in time for Christmas mass. Houses and streets are
[356] cleaned and repaired, fireplaces whitewashed, and supplies are taken in for the 12 days as steamer service is curtailed. On Christmas Eve, a special dish of
[262] corned ling or cod smothered in sauce is served at "Christmas supper," and large
[364] white candles purchased in the shops are placed on the dining table and in one or more windows of the cottage, to be burned nightly during the 12 days. The sight from the sea of the darkened island with its hundreds of candles rivals in beauty the view of the mainland coast far away on St. John's Eve, when bonfires are
[574] lighted as far as the eye can see. Relatives visit one another after Christmas supper,
[431] and when the children have been put to bed, stockings are hung above the fireplace and filled by the parents with oranges, candies, ribbons, pencils, handkerchiefs,
[861] and toys for the infants. Santa Claus is the gift giver, so infants are taught, and thus he can be used to promote good behavior on their part in the weeks prior to Christmas; this belief seldom persists into childhood, however, as older children
[431] are eager to disabuse their younger siblings of it. Adults usually do not exchange gifts, but they receive them from kin and acquaintances abroad to whom they in
[262] turn send Christmas cards. On Christmas Day, special cakes and breads are served

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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November 1st. Imbolc heralded the coming of spring with the lactation of ewes, while at Beltaine cattle were driven to open grazing after passing between bonfires which magically protected them against disease and ensured their fertility. The harvest commenced with Lughnasa, and the grazing season ended with Samhain. Of these festivals, Imbolc has become reinterpreted with the feast of St. Brigid; Beltaine and Samhain, known today as May Day and Allhallows respectively, have remained almost untouched by Christianity and are observed in Inis Beag; but Lughnasa has disappeared from island tradition. Lughnasa still is celebrated in many parts of Ireland and is the subject of a monumental folklore study—Maire MacNeill's *The Festival of Lughnasa*; until the introduction of early potatoes into Inis Beag, harvesting commenced on this day, but any other practices associated with Lughnasa were abandoned long ago. Minor pagan festivals have become reinterpreted with Whitsuntide and the feasts of St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, all of which are observed in Inis Beag.

Brigid, the most renowned of Irish female saints, was a cowherd and therefore is associated with cattle and with flowers, such as the dandelion, which nourish young lambs in the spring. On the last day of January, a small "Brigid's Cross" is fashioned from straw in each household of Inis Beag, and is thrust into the thatching at the end of the feast day. Crosses once were made from rushes, wood, metal, and even paper, and it is possible to determine the age of a thatched cottage being dismantled or renovated by counting the number of crosses salvaged from the straw debris. The Celts worshipped the sun whose symbol was the swastika, and the Brigid's Cross takes this form. It is a charm which protects the house (and the byre on the mainland) and those within it from harm, especially by fire, during the year. At the beginning of this century, a destitute woman who lived alone used to go from door to door begging for food and carrying a large "Brigid's Doll" made of straw and dressed immaculately in white with a picture of the saint on its breast. Some of the folk pulled straw from the doll to manufacture their crosses. After the woman recited the following poem, she was presented with food in honor of the saint, for which she blessed each person in the household with the doll:

Here comes Brigid	She is deaf and
Dressed in white.	She is dumb.
Give her something	For God's sake,
For the night.	Give her some.

Today, small groups of girls travel about the island emulating their predecessor by begging for coins to buy candy and donate to the church. A Brigid's Doll dressed in confirmation garb is carried by the leader of each group, and is used to confer blessings after the girls have recited in unison the two verses.

May Eve and Allhallows' Eve are both times when it is dangerous to go out of doors alone at night or be abroad after midnight, for the "big fellow" roams the back of the island, and everywhere pagan fairies, witches, vindictive ghosts, and the dog of the tumulus search for human victims. The safety of cattle is of particular concern to the folk on May Eve, and a common practice is to attach to the horn or tail of a cow a cloth containing a piece of iron which has

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been blessed, to protect the beast from milk pilfering fairies and hag witches. Among the taboos associated with May Day are those prohibiting the visiting of wells before dawn and giving away fire; as regards the latter taboo, to do so is to "give away the luck of the farm" for a year. Flowers are placed on the altars of the two medieval churches in the early morning of May Day, and at one time garlands of flowers shaped like a horseshoe were hung on door posts for luck. Souls of the dead are especially feared on Allhallows' Eve, and are placated in the Catholic tradition a day later on the feast of All Souls. The telling of stories is tabooed on Allhallows' Day, and the fairies are said to spoil wild blackberries for future eating with their before dawn depredations. My wife and I invited in a small group of islanders to celebrate Halloween in 1959, and we spent much of the evening having our fortunes told by an old man as it was done on this night when he was a youth; he poured melted lead through a key handle into a pan of cold water and made his prognostications by interpreting the configurations formed by the quick hardening metal.

Whitsuntide is the week beginning with the feast of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, but in Inis Beag it extends to the feast of Corpus Christi and is known as the "kinkish time," when once again evil forces hold sway in the island. Usually the weather is "heavy and close" and very changeable, I was told, and people tend to be irritable and more depressed than usual. Men do not cut their hair, nor does anyone wash themselves, during these 12 days. Although the pookah is always a danger, it is more active at this time than during the rest of the year, and children and visitors are warned not to fall asleep outside or even to sit down on the ground unless accompanied by others, whose presence will thwart any attempts by the demon to twist their limbs. Some islanders will not undertake major tasks or decide on important issues during Whitsuntide. Whereas Christmas and Easter are considered "lucky times," the "kinkish time" is unlucky, and those born then may have the evil eye or be destined to die violently or take a life.

In 1960, Corpus Christi was celebrated June 16th—two days after pattern day and eight days before St. John's Eve. The latter is one of several midsummer celebrations reported from Ireland which mark the summer solstice. Boys gather wood and tend a huge bonfire lighted just after sunset on the common land of Inis Beag, and a few islanders carry coals from it to their homes and fields for protection and to guarantee the fertility of their wives and female livestock. A man complained to me that an infection in his son's finger was caused by the failure of the boy to procure a coal from the fire as instructed. On that evening, the folk congregate outside of their cottages and along the terrace roads to watch the hundreds of bonfires alight on the mainland coast. In the past, cows were driven between twin bonfires as at Beltaine, and barren women and those yet to marry leaped over the dying flames. One of the most brilliant satirical novels of Irish life—both cruel and insightful—is Tracy's *The Straight and Narrow Path*, the plot of which focuses on the difficulties encountered by a vacationing British anthropologist after he writes for a newspaper an eye witness account of nuns jumping a St. John's Eve bonfire.

The legends are several and varied in Ireland about the life of St. Martin (O Suilleabhain 1957:252–261). There is no saint of this name who is of Irish

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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539 796 origin, and the church honors St. Martin of Tours in the liturgy of November 11th. O Suilleabhain suggests that the Catholic feast has been reinterpreted with [178] a pagan festival, which had the sacrificial shedding of blood as one of its main [182] facets. St. Martin also is associated with the grinding of corn and with miraculous [252] powers for causing growth in plants and creating animals from inanimate matter. 796 In Inis Beag, the saint is regarded as a miller who was martyred in Ireland during 796 the Middle Ages by being cast under a mill wheel and ground to death. A few 798 islanders still observe the taboos of not turning wheels or spinning on the vigil 796 and feast day to honor his martyrdom. The Sunday before St. Martin's Day is 796 called "bloody Sunday," when those who can afford to do so butcher a sheep to be consumed by the family on the feast day; others less fortunate kill a fowl or duck 782 during the vigil. Using the sacrificed animal's blood, the father or mother makes [234] the sign of the cross on the forehead of each member of the family, while praying [808] that the saint guard the safety of all in the year to follow. Some folk use the blood [251] to bless in a like manner the fireplace, bedposts, front door, and outbuildings; all crosses, including those on the forehead, are allowed to remain until obliterated by natural causes.

796 Just as the girls of Inis Beag carry the Brigid's Doll and beg from door to 825 door on the feast day of the saint, the boys do the same with a wren attached to 417 a long wooden pole on the morning of St. Stephen's Day, the feast day following 53 Christmas. The "wrenboys" travel in pairs and are invited into each home, where they are awarded coins for dancing and singing this song:

> Wren, wren, the king of the birds,
> St. Stephen's Day he was caught in the furze.
> So little I am, my family is great.
> Get up landlady and give us a break.
>
> Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
> And give us a shilling to carry the wren.
> If you haven't a shilling a ha'penny will do.
> If you haven't a ha'penny—God bless you.

Handkerchiefs, ribbons, and a sprig of holly also are attached to the pole, and in 1959 only one pair of youths managed to "hunt the wren" successfully and thus maintain the tradition. A home is not blessed by these visitations, as in the case of the groups of girls on St. Brigid's Day, but the act of giving money is believed [184] to bring luck to the household. In some regions of the mainland, wrenboys wear straw masks, animal skins, or horns, and carry the wren on a holly bush or decorated wooden tray as they march in procession shouting and singing songs to the accompaniment of homemade skin tambourines (Evans 1957:279). Little is known of the pagan roots of the ceremony.

791 In addition to the reinterpretations associated with the holy well and with 796 Celtic festivals, there are many others of lesser significance of which only three will be considered here: beliefs concerning ghosts, the evil eye, and the afterworld. 711 We have seen that most of the folk have had contact of some sort with the fairies; 715 they also have witnessed ghosts—called "shades"—in corporeal form in Inis Beag or sailing the surrounding waters. These beings, who "aren't of this world," some-